CPI

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6-73

C.P.L./Gang

PUBLICATIONS©

...INFORMATION...

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Our apologies, but due to the increase in paper cost, we are forced to increase the price of C.P.L. to 35¢. To offset the increase in price , please notice the quality now offered. For even more improvements, see next issue!

Last, but not least: Due to production problems (on the part of EPOCH) C.P.L. will not be producing that zine. We apologize to all the fans who we informed of this,and sympathize with all those who ordered that zine.

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EDITORIAL

Big changes are on their way, if you couldn't tell already.

C.P.L. #5 showcases the work of Canadian artist, John L. Byrne. You can be sure to see more of his talent in future issues.

The inside cover is the first in a projected series of Charlton characters to be offered in a big portfolio done by John and long-time fan, short-time pro: Duffy Vohland.

Speaking of Duffy, you'll see works by him throughout this issue, also. Duff is perhaps the most prominent member of the "GANG" to date. Although answering to four different addresses, he never fails to send us news, art, and the latest scandles from New York. Duffy is currently working with Dave Cockrum on the Legion and, soon, will probably be inking a few of Marvel's line, too.

Second on the list of prominent "GANG" members is Roger Slifer, who was recently kicked out of a small Mid-Western town and landed in the C.P.L. office. Since he refused to leave, I was forced to make him co-editor in an effort to discourage him from staying on. Rog will be co-editing C.P.L. with me until he becomes too talented to remain a fan and journeys to the "Big Apple" to seek fame and fortune in comics (Looks like he's here to stay, folks!). Roger's past credits include articles for Etcetera, Chronicle, and Epoch. This issue he contributes his column "Revival-Survival" on THE AVENGER!

You can be sure of seeing "Revival-Survival" here on a regular basis and in a few other fanzines, such as the Legion Outpost.

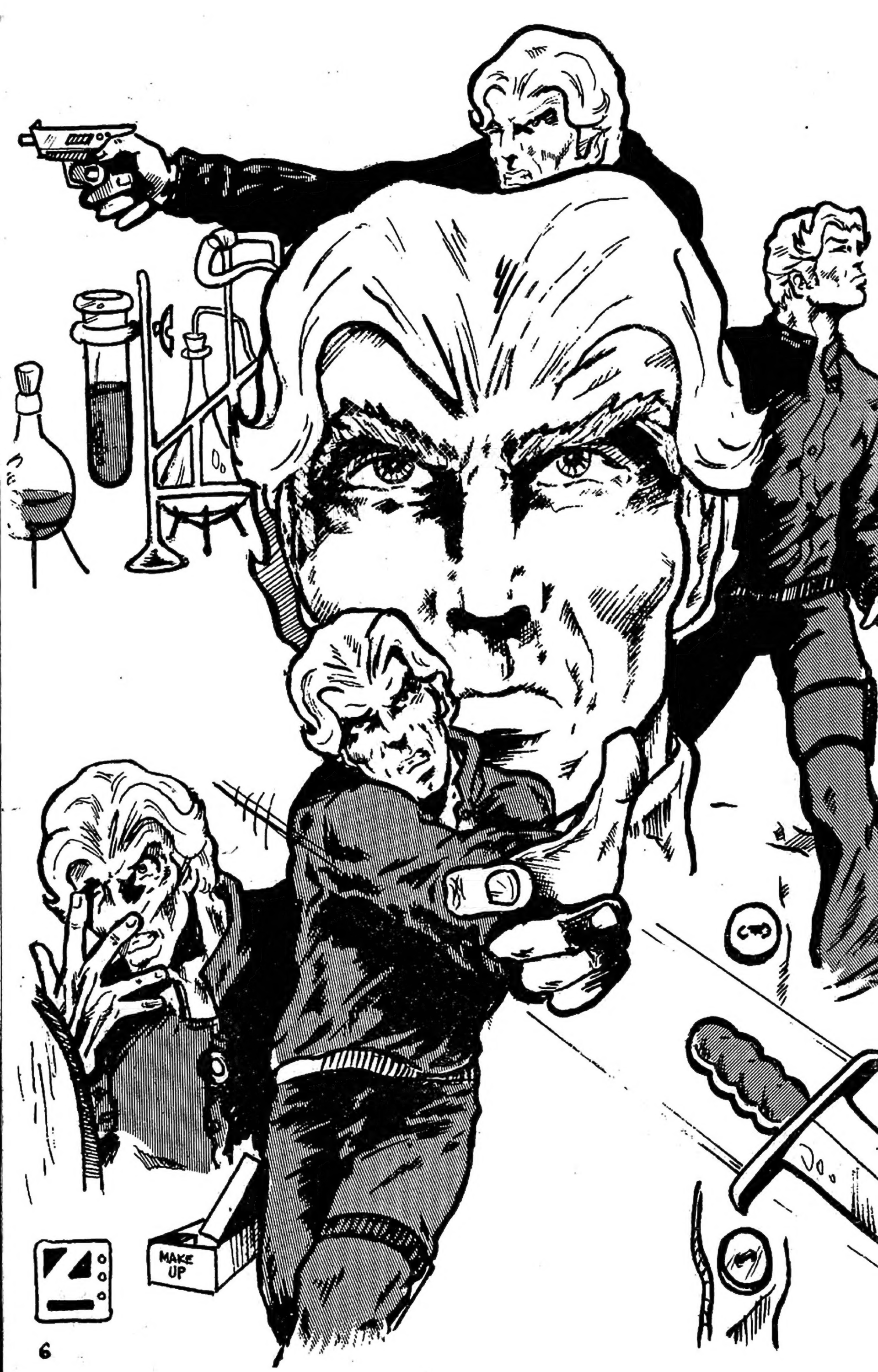
The third member is possibly the hardest to talk about, because he is also the hardest to understand. I'm speaking of the infamous Dr. Sterno, alias Roger Stern. Sterno was the originator of the comics course, now taught at Indiana University by Mike Uslan. He even taught the course himself for the first semester, but gave it up for a career in radio, as traffic manager at WXLW in Indianapolis. His prize possessions are a replica of Froggy the Gremlin and his Shadow article which he donates this issue.

The fanatical Doc Savage freak known as "Doc" Larry Brnicky contributed the Doc Savage article this issue. Larry also gave us permission to print his Doc Savage illo by Neal Adams (the smacking sound you hear is the sound of us kissing his feet. Well, we had to get it somehow didn't we?) which Neal did for him at the New York Comicon. Thanks Larry! And thanks Neal; without you we wouldn't have the taste of worn leather in our mouths.

Be sure to be here next issue for we're sure to have some big surprises. Next issue features Jim Starlin, Dan Adkins, Val Mayerik, Paul Gulacy, and there's more in the works!!

Until next time...

Heavy Hemongers, Bob and Rog


MAKE
UP

REVIVAL-SURVIVAL

THE AVENGER

Unlike the other articles in this issue, this isn't about a pulp hero who has been adapted to the comic book field. Rather, this article is about a pulp character who should be put into contemporary pictorial literature—— The Avenger!

I'm sure that many of you reading this are as familiar with this character as I. My introduction to the Avenger came a little over a year ago when I happened to notice it as I was looking over the paperback rack. The cover caught my eye; a figure in a grey outfit and a grey face to match blending into a purple backround. Another thing about the cover interested me. In the black strip across the top was written, "#1 Justice Inc." Now it wasn't the title that interested me as much as the fact that it had a number 1, denoting the first of a series of books about this unique looking character.

Purchasing the book and the next two in the series which were also available at the time, I rushed home to read them. In the first issue we learned that the Avenger was originally Richard Benson, a millionaire adventurer. Also in this first book of the Avenger's exploits we find what prompted him to become The Avenger. A crime ring ruthlessly murdered his wife and child.

This personal loss which inspired him to use his great wealth to destroy this and other crime rings also had an interesting side effect. The nerve shock of his wife and daugh ter's death caused his face muscles to become paralyzed, unable to portray expression although he could prod the skin with his fingers to form the features of almost anyone he wished to impersonate. Using his paralyzed facial muscles, his wealth and contacts in the business world, as well as his superb physique; Dick Benson, destined to become known as The Avenger, obtained vengeance on the killers of his family.

Another important event of the Avenger's first episode was in acquiring of his first aides. Fergus MacMurdie,a Scottish chemist who had lost his family to a powerful crime ring. His second aide was Smitty, a six foot plus giant who was framed into spending a year in jail for a crime he had nothing to do with. In the next two books of the sereis the Avenger acquired three more aides as well as a block long headquarters on Bleek Street; an appropriately titled roadway for the tragedy struck members of his little band.

The Doc Savage fans among you out there are probably saying The Avenger is just a cheap imatation of Doc Savage. After all, Doc Savage was a wealthy adventurer who was promted into fighting crime by the murder of his father. Other similarities include Doc Savage's aides and his being master of disguise.

And, in a way. you are probably right! The Avenger was originated by Street and Smith Publications,the same people who created Doc Savage. In fact, they even used the same pen name; that of Kenneth Robeson, for both characters. Street and Smith probably looked at the success of Doc Savage and intentionally modeled The Avenger after ol' Doc in order to see if they could double their success.

However, The Avenger is far from being a cheap imatation. It seems to me the creators of the Avenger went out of their way to improve various aspects of the Doc Savage character. I'll proceed to delve into these various improvements.

Motivation—— The death of a parent, as in the Doc Savage origin, is a very difficult thing to lose. However, the loss of a wife and child is infinately harder to take. A parent you are born to; you have no choice in the matter. A wife on the other hand you choose, with no one else involved, except, of course, the person whom you marry.

A child is a great loss because it is the creation of you, your wife and God. The ties between a man and his wife and a man to his child are much stronger than a child's tie to his parent. Thus, The Avenger has a greater motivation for his crime-fighting career than Doc Savage.

Disguise—— Doc Savage is known as a master of disguise. But Doc Savage's disguises have to be purely make-up and masks; whereas The Avenger can mold his very features to match the person whose place he's taking. So, the Avenger is a better master of disguise than Doc Savage.

Aides —— Although Doc Savage's aides were different in appearance they were all basically the same. All were white, caucasian, and male. When reading a Doc Savage novel the

(continued on page 18) -

WRIGHTSON
'70

DOC AT MARVEL

Right off I'll confess that I'm a Doc Savage aficionado. So rest assured this history of Doc's recent four-color career comes from the heart and is not just an assignment. After my introduction to the Man of Bronze by a friend I soon surpassed his collection and continued to this day. Imagine my shock when, after reading more than 60 Doc paperbacks, I read in December, 1971, that Marvel planned to soon release a Doc Savage comic book.

First news on the project had Roy Thomas scripting with John Severin inking Ross Andru's pencils. Original stories would be adapted over three issues with initial release scheduled for March 1972. But as per usual when Marvel announces a definite team on a new book,time and circumstances result in an entirely new combination. Doc Savage #1 finally hit the stands in July of "72. In the interim Roy Thomas became editor of the Marvel line and understandably had to drop many writing committments. With the first two pages scripted, writing responsibility shifted to Steve Englehart. John Severin's work load needed alleviating so Jim Mooney inked the first issue.

But it was a good first issue even without the promised team.An excellent John Buscema cover, misleading as only a Marvel covee can be, set the starting pace. Which was immediately dropped with the Andru-Mooney interior art. Almost no feeling for depth of shading is evident. Everyone looks like Saturday morning cartoon escapees. (Note; Examine Marvel-Team-Up #7 for some good work by this team.) And in a really idiotic move, Monk is drawn in bell bottoms and 4-inch 'chunky' heels.

Thankfully the writing chores were handled superbly. The Thomas plotted-Englehart scripted adaptation came astonishingly close to following the original. Moreover, no half-witted attempt at trying to condense half the pulp in one issue occured. Doc Savage #1 covered only the first 28 pages of the original, allowing for the laying of much needed groundwork.

Two major changes occured in Doc #2. Ernie Chua took over the inking and Jim Steranko drew the cover. With Chua's inking, Ross Andru's pencils looked great, especially in medium shots; those scenes 3-6 feet from the viewer. Layouts improved and characters took on a gratifying 3-dimensional look.(especially Princess Monja...ahem)The Steranko cover was his best during this latest return stint.Color only lessened its impact. A pity this and the next issue's Steranko cover were largely the causes of this comic's cancellation.

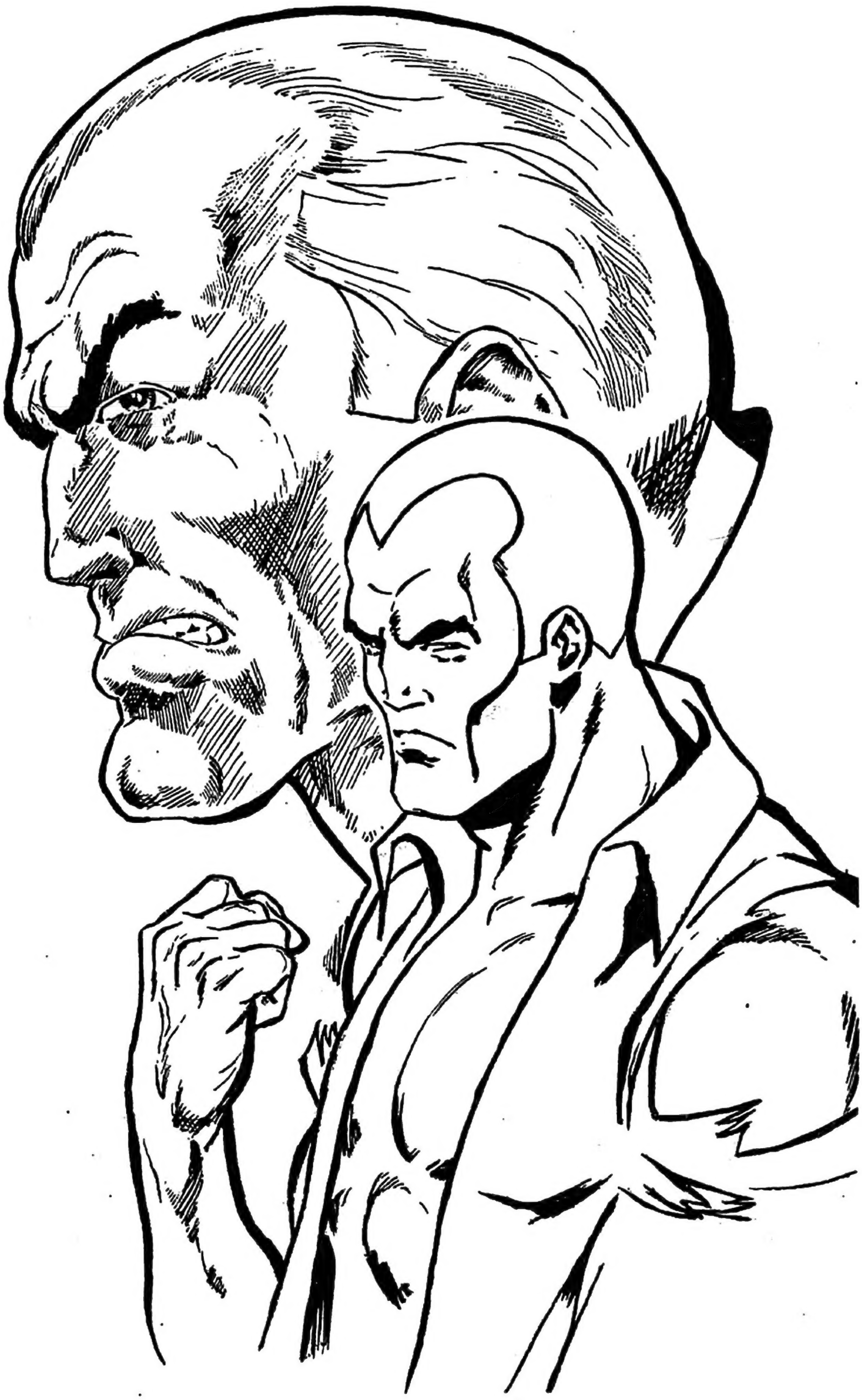
That's correct,issues of Doc with Steranko covers were poor sellers. Disregarding the first issue (which almost always sell well) Marvel had only the sales figures for #2 & #3 to scrutinize when deciding Doc's fate.

If only the mind-less pre-adolescent masses who comprise the bulk of comic buyers would have opened #3 it would have been a sell-out. This story heralded the start of Palmer's three issue reign as inker. And reign it was. Palmer's genius with zip-a-tone and shadow are striking, especially when you consider this is the same Ross Andru who pencilled issue 1. With this art and script Doc Savage 3-4 gets my nomination as best adaptation of the series. Too bad the choice of story also helped bring about the book's demise.

Think about it. What can a Steranko or a Palmer do when there is little to work with? "Death in Silver" made for a decent story, but certainly could have not produced the same reactions as later adaptations. Put another way, would your average ten-year-old buy a comic with a 'werewolf' or with 'silver death's-heads'? The actual scripting of 'Silver' equalled Englehart's usual great work especially in bringing out the who-done-it aspect inherent to any Doc story.

Issues #3 & #4 also began the 1930's setting after the 'timeless# Mayan background. Office decor,public phone booths,armored cars, Pat's beauty salon, the Indian Head Club; in fact just about every panel had a 30's flavor to it. Most gratifyingly Doc's bullet proof vest appears and the reader is first exposed to the copyrighted Savage "weird, unearthly trilling'. (Admittedly hard in a medium based solely on sight.)

More obviously horror-oriented stories began with #5. Andru-Palmer again outdid themselves on the visuals. Too bad the Gardner Fox script didn't justify that much effort. The monster theme allowed for two of the comic's best covers most



notably issue 6. It's doubtful anyone picking up these stories for their cover would buy the following issues after sampling Fox's peculiar writing ability.

Most of the dialogue took on a forced,unnatural aspect. Monk, Ham, and the others became stooges for the all-knowing Man of Bronze,a tack the pulps followed but which Englehart successfully avoided. A lot of what Doc had to say could have more effectively been done in captions. Witness Doc's dialogue from pages 3 & 4 of #6;"Close! Another few inches and that BOULDER would have MASHED my leg!", "THIS time they hit me!" and "This will give me...BREATH ING ROOM!". Try comparing it to the amount of dialogue spilled in an Englehart fight scene. One glaring error in plotting also occurs. A character named Jean Morriss appears as a lion tamer who speaks Swahili. In one of her first appearances she starts taking pot shots at Doc, Monk and Ham. Why is she shooting at them? Why is it neccessary that she speak Swahili? How do the gangsters expect a lion tamer to control 50-foot monsters anyway? These questions all point out the glaring deficiency in trying to adapt a 120-page paperback in a 40-page comic book. Plot threads dangle and coherency is lost. If Doc went (or maybe still could go) to monthly publication three-parters could have made for a much more intelligent telling of a story.

The last two issues of Doc's short-lived mag ran "The Brand of the Werewolf" another of the Man of Bronze's more famous adventures. The Buckler cover for #7 proved the existence of stretch pants in the 1930's. Frank Springer's inks muddied Ross Andru's pencils on this issue but his finished art over Rich Buckler's breakdowns looked clear and uncluttered, nearly as good as #2. Fox got a co-scripter in issue #7 and with issue 8 Tony Isabella took over total authorship. The improvement that resulted bodes well for future titles he works on. One small change occurs in the final issue. Pat asks to formally join the group and Doc readily agrees. Future issues(if any)must now contend with writing a girl's role,making it all the more difficult for the writer.

Thus ends Doc's brief, but illustrious career at Marvel. I strongly believe the possibility exists for the title's ressurrection. The emphasis on horror in the later issues and the better covers which develop from the horror, will result in better sales. Letter writing and picking up extra copies have their effect on the higher ups, too. So how about taking the time and help bring Doc back.

Running boards forever!!!

Grackle borgward,
'Doc'Larry Brnicky

the SHADOW'S NOSE and other Anatomical Comments

Okay, so it's the middle of the 30's and youre a kid in the midwest. You go into town on a Saturday afternoon and walk into the bus station, or the newstand if the town is big enough, and you pluck Down your nickles for the latest copy of THE SHADOW. Then it's hurry home & sit under a tree while your mind lurks in the darkened halls of a cheap Manhatten dive.

Why the Shadow? Well, why not? Just think for a minute back to your youth...no, younger than that...back to the age of two or three,..... if your memory of those days hasn't been totally obscured. Remember the dark? Remember how it used to absolutely take over the world at night? There it was...night-time... and there you were..in bed..with the guano half-scared out of you. And even when there was a bright,moonlit night, the darkness was still there, hiding in the shadows,scaring you to death...and you loving every wretched minute of it. Down deep inside there was this almost primal urge to become part of that darkness. You didn't know quite why..... but somehow it seemed that if you could become the darkness, it could not hurt you. There was this fantastic dream of being able to pull the darkness around you and then to release it,overwhelming your enemy, be they real or supposed. So why not the Shadow? The sound, the name, even a kind of feel.... it was all there!The Shadow...it was a natural!!

So you're a kid during the Thirties and you're reading the Shadow. And your very proper Sunday school mind is in that cheap dive. You're there to get a numbers boss, or a white slaver, or some sort of underworld power baron. Suddenly the scum you've been looking for makes his appearance and here you come,boiling out of the darkness....the form of the SHADOW!! And what a form!A big blotch of darkness with only three distinguishable features: A razor-sharp hawklike nose, two incredibly clear eyes, blazing like red-hot coals...and a pair of hands! It was the eyes & nose that commanded the attention, the hands often going unnoticed. And that was always a definite error on the part of the Shadow's victims! They were long hands, the fingers especially long. Long,sensitive..yet not effeminate.. hands that were at the same time firm & strong...equally at home feeling out the tumblers of a complex safe, hefting twin .45's,or forming mighty clubs to pound the heads of blackguards.

The Shadow! A devil on the side of the angels! Dishing out all the baser punishments to those who used them regularly as a matter of course. Doc Savage might pinch a sensitive nerve to subdue his foes, the Avenger would trick the villians into falling on their own swords, but the Shadow would just wade in with his twin .45's & fill everyone full of lead! (true,the Spider was a bit on the bloodthirsty side, too. But he was little more than a Shadow surrogate...if not the Shadow himself! Right, Mr. Farmer?)

So you've got the Shadow... king of the pulps and superstar of the golden age of radio. He even makes a few appearances on the screen. He, of course, makes it into the comics. The first time for Smith & Street is nothing to really brag on. The second time for Archie is... well...only the names are the same. But now the comics are possessed by darkness once more, and it's the thirties all over again. Autogyros, the El, the Hacks, Harry Vincent, Margo Lane...& the Shadow! Amd kids in the midwest get a chance to get the same thrill their fathers had, hiding in the darkness of that old familiar dive. Thanks, Denny. Thanks, Mike. The nights are just a little scary again.

Sterno's Hot Ones

characters all seemed to run together.Their personalities just weren't distinct and different enough.

On the other hand, the Avenger's aides are of a more varied type. Besides the bony Scot and the giant, Smitty; Benson also has Nellie Gray, a girl adept at judo,and Josh Newton and his wife Rosebel the black member of the team. This was a real advancement for 1940; having blacks used in a comic story as equals. These more diversified aides make it easier to follow the story than if it were a Doc Savage novel.

Weapons---In addition to his scientific weapons similar to Doc Savage's devices, the Avenger also has a couple of weapons that he uses time and again during his adventures. These are his gun and throwing Knife (which he affectionately calls Mike and Ike), which he uses with extreme skill. Extreme to the point that he can "crease" people on purpose. By using weapons that the reader knows about, the authors didn't always have to pull escapes out of the hat, thus keeping from stroching the readers' credability every other page.

These things I have listed are what make me like the Avenger more than Doc Savage. Why don't you pick up one and see if you agree? Also, you might prod DC into putting out a comic based on the Avenger. After all, Warner owns both DC and the Avenger series so who knows what a little pushing in the right direction might produce...

For those interested in the Avenger, here is a list for the Avenger titles out, thus far; and the ones that should be out in the future following the same numbering system that Warner Paperback Library has used so far.

Continued from page 7

AVENGER #1 : JUSTICE INC.
AVENGER #2 : THE YELLOW HOARD
AVENGER #3 : THE SKY WALKER
AVENGER #4 : THE DEVIL'S HORNS
AVENGER #5 : THE FROSTED DEATH
AVENGER #6 : THE BLOOD RING
AVENGER #7 : STOCKHOLDERS IN DEATH
AVENGER #8 : THE GLASS MOUNTAIN
AVENGER #9 : TUNED FOR MURDER
AVENGER #10: THE SMILING DOGS
AVENGER #11: THE RIVER OF ICE
AVENGER #12: THE FLAME BREATHERS
AVENGER #13: MURDER ON WHEELS
AVENGER #14: THREE GOLD CROWNS
AVENGER #15: HOUSE OF DEATH
AVENGER #16: THE HATE MASTER
AVENGER #17: NEVLO
AVENGER #18: DEATH IN SLOW MOTION
AVENGER #19: PICTURES OF DEATH
AVENGER #20: THE GREEN KILLER
AVENGER #21: THE HAPPY KILLERS
AVENGER #22: THE BLACK DEATH
AVENGER #23: THE WILDER CURSE
AVENGER #24: MIDNIGHT MURDER

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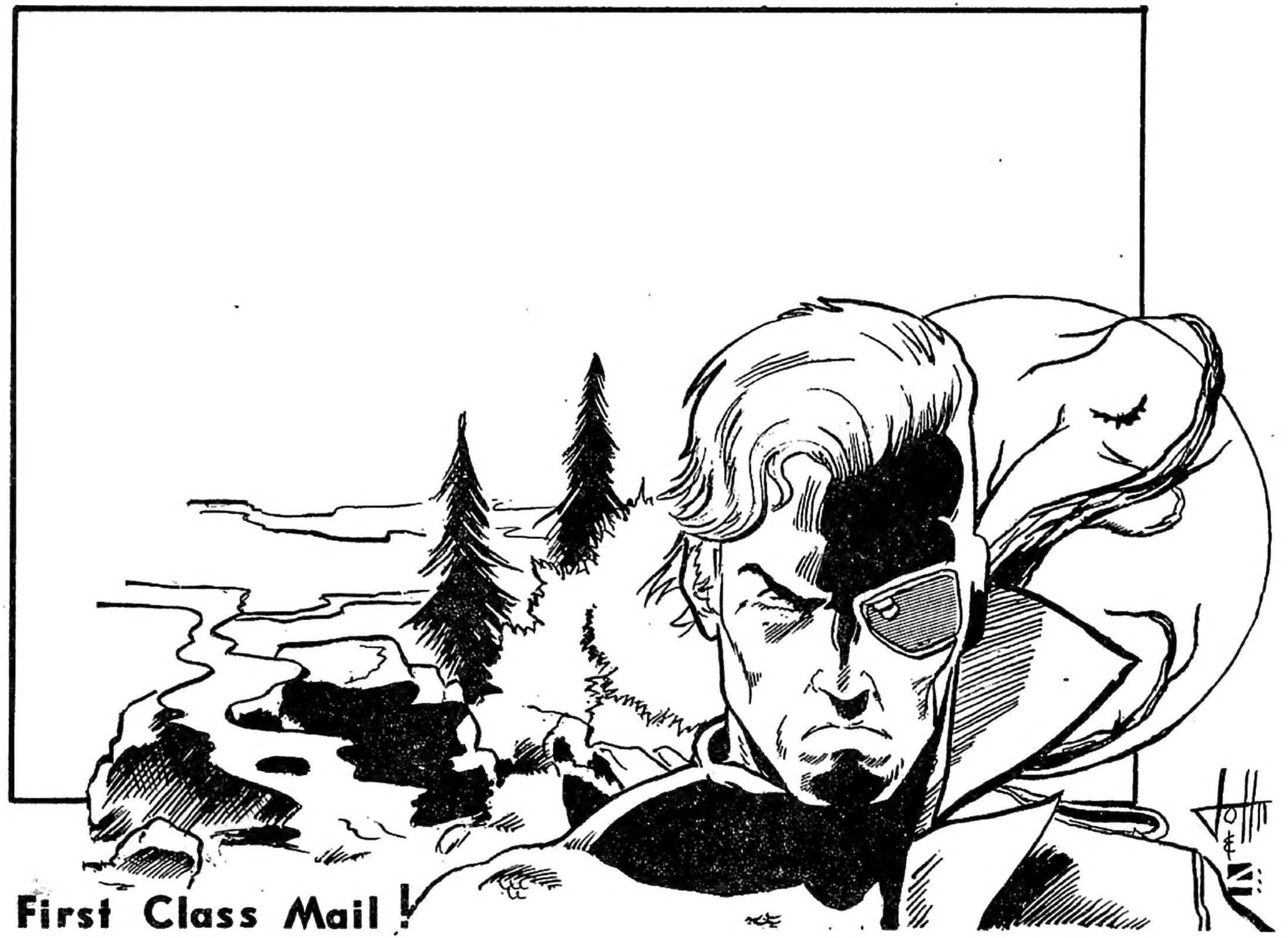

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